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**Committee:** House Criminal Justice  
**In support of:** HB 4300  
**Date:** May 15, 2013

Dear Chair Heise and Members of the House Criminal Justice Committee:

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), the nation's largest and most effective non-profit animal protection organization, supports HB 4300 and urges a "yes" vote from the Committee.

A 2009 incident in Connecticut in which a chimpanzee attacked and severely injured a woman – and then was shot and killed by police – tragically illustrates that nonhuman primates should not be kept as pets. They are wild animals, even if bred in captivity and hand raised by humans. Keeping primates as pets threatens public health and safety, as well as animal welfare.

**Risk to public safety:** While infant primates may seem cute and cooperative, they inevitably grow stronger and more aggressive. Chimpanzees become many times stronger than humans. Even small monkeys can inflict serious harm by biting and scratching. Removing their teeth, as many pet owners do, is cruel and no safeguard against injury. At least 160 people – including 53 children – have been injured by primates since 2000. These include a 6-year-old girl in Trenton, Michigan, who had to undergo testing after being bitten by someone's Java macaque while the animals was being walked on a leash outdoors where the child was playing. Many more incidents likely occurred, but went unreported.

**Risk to public health:** Nonhuman primates can spread diseases that pose serious health risks to humans, including Herpes B and tuberculosis. Most macaque monkeys naturally carry the deadly Herpes B virus, for example. Research published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) concludes that the health risks make macaques unsuitable as pets. In Canada, people who work with monkeys cannot donate blood because of the potential risk of Simian foamy virus, a retrovirus, as well other as yet unknown diseases.

**Risk to animal welfare:** Nonhuman primates kept in captivity need housing in very large enclosures, the companionship of other nonhuman primates, and a

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stimulating environment – in short, the kind of environment provided by their natural habitat. The average pet owner cannot meet these needs. A chimpanzee who becomes too difficult to handle at age eight might live another 50 years. There are few options for placing these animals. These social, intelligent animals may end up confined to small cages or sold to substandard menageries.

**State action is needed:** At least 20 states prohibit keeping primates as pets, and federal health regulations prohibit importing primates into the United States for the pet trade. Still these animals are readily available for sale from breeders and even over the Internet. Michigan appropriately prohibits big cats, bears, and wolf hybrids as pets. The state should add primates to the list before another person is injured or killed.

In the interest of public safety and animal welfare, please support HB 4300. Thank you for your time and consideration of this important issue.

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